

The Use of Themes and Variations in Early and Contemporary Juju Music

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Abstract—This paper discusses the thematic structure of Yoruba popular music of Southwest Nigeria. It examines the use of themes and variations in early and contemporary Juju music. The work is an outcome of a research developed by the author in his doctoral studies at the University of Lagos, Nigeria, with the aim of analyzing the thematic and motivic developments in Yoruba popular genres. Observations, interviews, live recordings and CDs were used as methods for eliciting information. Field recordings and CDs of selected musical samples were also transcribed and notated. The research established the prevalent use of string of themes by Juju musicians as a compositional technique in moving from one musical section to another, as they communicate the verbal messages in their song. These themes consist of the popular ‘call and response’ form found in most African music, analogous to the western ‘subject and answer’ style of the fugue or sonata form, although without the tonic–dominant relations. Due to the short and repetitive form of African melodies and rhythms, a theme is restated as a variation, where its rhythmic and melodic motifs are stylistically developed and repeated, but still retaining its recognizable core musical structure. The findings of this study showed that Juju musicians generally often employ a thematic plan where new themes are used to arrange the songs into sections, and each theme is developed into variations in order to further expand the music, eliminate monotony, and create musical aesthetics, serving as hallmark of its musical identity. The study established the musical and extra-musical attributes of the genre, while recommending further research towards analyzing the various compositional techniques employed in African popular genres.

Keywords—Compositional techniques, Popular music, Theme and variation, Thematic development.

I. INTRODUCTION

MUSIC in Nigeria, before the Arabic and European influences, functioned in the context of the religious and secular aspects of the people’s indigenous music, representing a viable means of understanding their ethos. These external factors impacted on the creativity of Yoruba popular music as it was during this period, the first six decades of the twentieth century, that neo-traditional typologies emerged [15, p.5, p.99]. These typologies assumed popular status due to the general demand, socio-cultural relevance and economic enlightenment within the society. Popular music have been described as a social music encompassing several styles which are enjoyed, patronized, and accepted by the people due to the fact that it is readily comprehensible by the people [7, p.81], [11, p.25], [8, p.7], [13, p.41], [16, p.372]. Omibiyi and Forchu referred to three categories of Nigerian popular music, with varying levels of musical appropriation; those with roots

in the indigenous music of an ethnic group, those with local and foreign influence, and those based of foreign styles [5, p.154], [9, p.104]. Juju music cuts across categories of those localized in Yorubaland and exhibiting musical elements due to interaction between local and Western cultures. Such interactions in Juju music resulted in the development of Western musical styles, compositional techniques, and instrumentation in its musical expression, as a creative process engaged by the musicians. These compositional techniques include the use of themes in its melodic and rhythmic formation. However, since African melodies and rhythms are short and limited in range, with restrictions on the language’s tonal inflection, the themes are repeated and developed through the process of variation to achieve musical and linguistic intelligibility, extend the musical materials, and vary the elements to avoid monotony.

This paper analyzes the use of themes and variations in early and contemporary Juju musicians, as a compositional and performance practice. The study highlights thematic development in Juju music, a Yoruba popular genre that developed from traditional music as a result of inter and intra musical and cultural influences, engendered through adoption of musical instruments and appropriation of Western musical styles and techniques, as well as the people’s desire for their indigenous and intrinsic musical materials. The appropriation of musical elements, according to Omojola, not only facilitated the commercialization and musical acceptance of Yoruba popular music; it aided the development of their musical structure, and global appeal [10, p.162-205].

II. HISTORICAL VIEW OF JUJU MUSIC IN NIGERIA

Juju music, according to Christopher Waterman, is a local variant of the urban West African palmwine guitar tradition. It emerged as a defined genre in the Nigerian colonial capital of Lagos around 1932. The genre was defined more by ethos and social context than by a delimited set of stylistic features. It got its name from the tambourine, which was referred to as “je juu” by a French salesman, and later popularly called ‘juju’ drum [2, p.58], [15, p.50]. Written evidence suggests Asiko and Agidigbo music among the historical antecedents of Juju music, and Tunde King, a Lagosian guitarist, as the “initial popularizer of the genre [2, p.58], [17, p.55], [15, p.54]. Other major exponents include I.K. Dairo (a.k.a Baba Aladura), Babajide Ojo, Ebenezer Fabiyi (a.k.a. Ebenezer Obey), Sunday Aladeniyi (a.k.a. Sunny Ade), etc. Juju performance characteristically engaged both call-and-response patterns and combined choral singing, with vocal melodies influenced by Christian hymns. While the lead voice sings from his

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memorized repertoires during performance, he however relies on the band resource man, saddled with the task to interact and gather information from the audience on dignitaries and events, to adjust the musical performance to suit the occasion.

III. THEME AND FORM IN MUSIC

A theme within a written work is typically expressed as the meaning or purpose of a musical piece. It is usually the main, overall musical figure of a work. While a motif, the shortest musical idea, is simply the building block to a theme, occurring at structural points and only take their shape due to the repetitive connections formed between them [3, p.9], [4, p.907], [14, p.13], themes are the walls that make up the structural frame work of the whole music, unifying the entire musical components. Corroborating this difference, Reti explained that motifs could only assume a role in the compositional design somewhat similar to that of a motif in the fine arts, while a theme is “a fuller group or “period” which acquires a “motivic” function in a composition’s course [12, p.11-12]. Often, unit of motifs will combine to form a theme, which in turn may be developed into its varied version, known as ‘theme and variation’, a technique developed in the sixteenth century, and standardized by the baroque period [6, p.301]. Thematic variations occur when rhythmic and melodic motifs of a theme are repeated with stylistic varying of its rhythm and melody, but still retaining its recognizable core musical structure.

In Yoruba music, form plays an important and functional role, and since function constrains form, the function of a music will determine its form and style, and the use to which the people performs it in the society [1, p.11]. Juju music functions as a social music, especially entertainment, amongst the Yoruba people. While the strophic call and response form is employed in both early and contemporary Juju, the latter use more of the through-composed patterns. Unlike the early Juju, with limited instrumentation and vocal simplicity, contemporary Juju with its elaborate vocal parts and western instruments exhibit extensive musical structure and hence engage more themes in its compositional and performance practice. A theme, most often than not, is complete in itself, containing a complete call and response with associated musical ‘subject and answer’. The lead voice sings either only the ‘subject’ or both ‘subject and answer’ of the theme in a call, and the chorus voices respond with an ‘answer’, or repeats the whole call, analogous to the western ‘subject and answer’ style of the fugue or sonata form, although without the tonic-dominant relations. Generally, Juju musicians make use of string of themes, including their unique signature tunes, in moving from one section of the music to another, as they communicate the verbal messages in their song, characterized by a new theme per section, giving rise to the thematic plan of each song.

IV. METHODOLOGY

This study is a qualitative research. It examines the thematic structure employed in Juju music. The research area is that of

the Yoruba people of south-western Nigeria where the selected genres have historic origin and practiced. Primary data were obtained from the fieldwork via observation, audio-visual recording, oral interviews, and close group discussion, while secondary data was sourced from libraries, print materials, seminars, lectures, online sources, references, and audio-visual Medias, etc. The Scope of study focuses on I.K Dairo, an early Juju music exponent, Yinka James, a contemporary Juju musician, and Ebenezer Obey, a key intermediate Juju icon who revolutionized the genre from its middle to the late period. Selected songs from I.K Dairo (OHRCD 57), Ebenezer Obey (OCD 148), and Yinka James (CD 004), representing each musical epoch, were notated and analyzed (Table I). The changing musical, social, political trends and functions experienced in the transitions of Juju music in the different Nigerian socio-political epoch were adequately represented in the selected musicians.

TABLE I
SCOPE OF STUDY SHOWING PERIODIZATION OF THE SELECTED GENRES AND MUSICIANS

Period	Musicians	Songs
Early Juju (Pre-Independence - before 1960)	I.K. Dairo	Erora F’eso J’aiye
Late Juju (Post-Independence - 1960 to 2000)	Ebenezer Obey	Inter Reformers
Contemporary Juju (Modern time - after 2000)	Yinka Praise	Praising Mood

V. ANALYSIS OF THEMATIC FORM IN JUJU MUSIC

The form employed in both early and contemporary Juju vocal music, stated earlier, is the call and response, analogous to the ‘solo and tutti’ terminology, with the whole music either in strophic or through-composed pattern. Generally, the songs start with an opening theme, sang by the lead and then repeated by both the lead and accompanying voices as a chorused theme. Thereafter in subsequent themes, the lead voice introduces the call alone, and the other voices sing different chorused response either alone or joined by the lead voice. However, while this form is kept short and simple in early Juju music, the contemporary musicians extend it with elaborate themes, hence generating copious variations. These variations could be as simple as a direct imitation of a solo theme as a chorused thematic section, or as dynamic as a melodic and rhythmic transformation of one thematic section in another. Each thematic section can be organized in a binary, ternary, or rondo-like form. In the binary form, the lead and chorus voices sing a series of similar melodic and rhythmic themes in one half of the music, and another similar themes in the other half (A-A or A-B). The ternary form involves a three-section music, where either the first and third section share the same or similar themes, different from the second section (A-B-A, A-B-A¹), or each section employs different themes (A-B-A¹ or A-B-C). The rondo-like form (or reversed rondo), bearing only a varied similitude to the western form, involves a constant theme repeated each time after a new theme has been exhausted (A-B-A-C-A-D-A or A-B-C-B-D-B). The two main stylistic thematic variations of the form adopted are:

A. Call and Response with Similar Melodic, Rhythmic and/or Textual Thematic Phrase

A simple thematic process where the chorus echoes similar length of musical phrase sang by the lead voice in a theme. The general practice here is to retain both the melody and rhythm, and then adjust the text accordingly to complete a

linguistic sentence or message. One variety include identical call and response (Fig. 1), having same length i.e. A-A.

The second variety involves an augmentation/ diminution of the call in the response (Fig. 2), resulting in an A-A¹ strophic form.



Fig. 1 (a) Call and Response with Similar Melodic, Rhythmic and/or Textual Thematic Phrase in 'Inter Reformers' (Theme 4) by Ebenezer Obey




Fig. 1 (b) Call and Response with Similar Melodic, Rhythmic and/or Textual Thematic Phrase in 'Erora Feso Jaiye' (Theme 1) by I.K. Dairo



Fig. 1 (c) Call and Response with Similar Melodic, Rhythmic and/or Textual Thematic Phrase in 'Praising mood' (Theme 1) by Yinka James

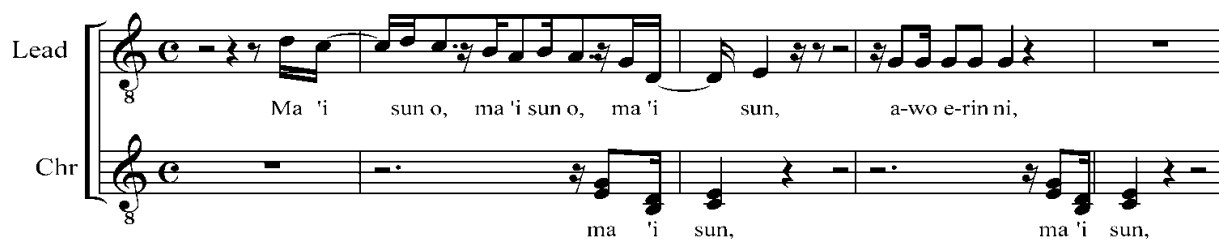


Fig. 2 (a) Augmentation of Response as Call in 'Inter Reformers' (Theme 5) by Ebenezer Obey



Fig. 2 (b) Diminution of Call as Response in 'Praising mood' (Theme 5) by Yinka James

The second variety includes a through-composed form, where both the lead and chorus sing thematic phrases with constantly changing melodic, rhythmic and textual materials, resulting in multiple A-B (binary) or A-B-C-D (potpourri) patterns.

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Within the structural framework of the call and response form are stylistic possibilities of solo singing by the lead, and chorus singing by both lead and group voices. Intermittent interjections by the soloist in-between chorus responses are also possible.

VI. THEMES AND VARIATIONS IN JUJU MUSIC

A. Early Juju

In early Juju music, the musical structure is short and simple with few themes, and each new thematic section a variation of the foregoing theme. In I.K Dairo's 'Erora f'eso j'aiye', the thematic plan is a strophic ternary form with three themes, where themes 2 and 3 are variations of theme 1 (Fig. 5). The variations are developed as motivic imitations, with

the two motifs in theme 1 repeated in variations 2 and 3 (Fig. 6).

B. Late Juju

Juju musicians continued to compose and perform this genre during the post – independence era using and modifying the same musical form and thematic process. However, as the music developed with more Western influence in terms of musical styles and instrumentation, the musicians used potpourri of forms, and more thematic materials with resultant variations to fill the enlarged musical structure. In 'Inter Reformers', Ebenezer Obey employed a thematic plan with 10 themes, where 3 themes are actual variations of previous themes (Fig. 7). Theme 1 is repeated as variation 1 serving as theme 4, while two variations of theme 6 are employed to constitute themes 7 and 9 respectively (Fig. 8).

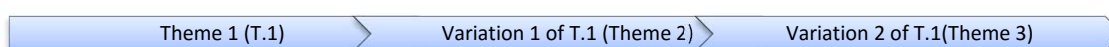


Fig. 5 Graphical illustration of Thematic plan in 'Erora F'eso J'aiye' by I.K. Dairo

Fig. 6 Analysis of Themes and Variations in 'Erora F'eso J'aiye' by I.K. Dairo



Fig. 7 Graphical illustration of Thematic plan in 'Inter Reformers' by Ebenezer Obey

Fig. 8 Analysis of Themes and Variations in 'Inter Reformers' by Ebenezer Obey

C. Contemporary Juju

With Juju music fully developed and past its peak, contemporary musicians appropriated other musical styles into the genre, hence the development of new forms such as 'Afro-Juju', 'Hip-hop Juju', 'Reggea-Juju', 'Disco-Juju', 'Gospel-Juju', etc., incorporating pure Western performance styles and practice in its vocal and instrumental parts. Thematic plans were still extensive, and the musical form consists of both 'call and response' and potpourri forms, with a mixture of strophic and through-composed patterns (Fig. 9). In 'Praising

Mood', a 'Gospel-Juju' by Yinka James, the song consists of 6 themes as its thematic plan, with theme 1 repeated in three variations to make up themes 2, 3, and 4 (Fig. 10). Elaborate themes were engaged with consequential variations developed throughout the enlarged musical structure. Variations were developed through the technique of motivic transformation of previous themes in each of the new thematic sections. Motifs 1 and 2 which make up theme 1 are transformed in variations 1, 2, and 3 (Fig. 10).



Fig. 9 Graphical illustration of Thematic plan in 'Praising Mood' by Yinka James

O lu wa l'o s'e yi funmi, e niyan ko, Bo sewu'E le du ma re, Ba ba, l'on so la,

To ba wu'E le du ma re, a se kan a mu bi o tu tu. O ku ta t'o mo le ko si le l'o jo si.

E ju be lo o. Ki ni Ba ba n'be re ni o wo mi o, a di sa o.

Fig. 10 Analysis of Themes and Variations in 'Praising Mood' by Yinka James

VII. CONCLUSION

The use of themes is a universal musical occurrence, used uniquely in different world music, including Juju music, as themes constitute a hallmark of stylistic creativity in Yoruba music in Nigeria. This paper presents a musicological analysis of the use of themes and variations in early and contemporary Juju music. It revealed that through the intercultural contact of the Yoruba people with the European world, together with local desires for social music outside those for ritual functions, neo-traditional typologies such as Juju music was formed, which eventually attained popular status musically and commercially. The study established the call and response as the musical form used in Juju music, identical to the 'solo and tutti' form, with the whole music either in strophic or through-composed arrangement. These call and response could be varied with similar or different melodic and rhythmic phrase as a theme. With the use of several themes, the musicians adopt a thematic plan for structuring the songs into thematic sections. Thematic use is deployed in early and contemporary Juju musical practice as a compositional technique by repeating and developing themes into variations through motivic imitations and transformations. These themes, which are creatively repeated by the musicians in order to achieve a long and meaningful musical sentences, are used to introduce new musical materials as they move from one section of the music to another, thereby establishing its musical form and thematic plan, and in the process creating individual signature tunes which are repeated in all their repertoires as a form of musical identity.

The study therefore contributes to knowledge in the area of theoretical analysis in Nigeria music by providing information on analysis of motifs and thematic development, geared towards the understanding of the form, style and creative practice in Yoruba popular music, and how Yoruba Juju musicians conceive and perform their music. There is need for further studies of the use of themes in Yoruba popular music, with its musical and extra-musical functionalities, with results useful as resource educational materials. Although the contemporary practice inculcating western-influenced musical styles in Juju music come with its usefulness, its originality must still be retained in its vocal music and instrumental accompaniment so as not to lose its indigenous style, musical identity, while promoting its global appeal.

APPENDIX I

E Rora F'eso J'aiye

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I.K. Dairo

The musical score is arranged in a system of staves. The instruments listed on the left are: Accordion, Lead Voice, Chorus, Iya Ilu, Samba & Ogido, Akuba, Sekere & Clap, Electric Guitar (two staves), Slide Guitar, and Bass Guitar. The score is in common time (C) and consists of two main sections, each with a first and second ending. The instrumental part is removed after 11 bars.

Fig. 11 Complete Score of Early Juju Music by I.K. Dairo (Instrumental part removed after 11 bars)

E Rora F'eso J'aiye

System 1 (Bars 1-11):

Acc. (Treble Clef): 7

Lead (Treble Clef): 8

Chr. (Bass Clef): 8

Iya (Treble Clef): 7

Sba Ogd (Treble Clef): 7

Akb (Treble Clef): 7

Sek Cip (Treble Clef): 7

E. Gtr. (Treble Clef): 7

S. Gtr. (Bass Clef): 7

Bass (Bass Clef): 7

System 2 (Bars 12-18):

Lead (Treble Clef): 12

Chr. (Bass Clef): 12

Lead (Treble Clef): 18

Chr. (Bass Clef): 18

Lyrics:

Lead: ai-ye o lo-pin. pin. f'esoj'aiye, i-le a-rakurin, f'esoj'aiye.

Chr.: ai-ye o lo-pin. pin. f'esoj'aiye, i-le a-rakurin, f'esoj'aiye.

Lead: i-le a-rabinin, f'esoj'aiye, pe b'aja ko se so o, akundakun o, ro-ra f'esoj'aiye e.

Chr.: i-le a-rabinin, f'esoj'aiye, pe b'aja ko se so o, akundakun o, ro-ra f'esoj'aiye e.

Fig. 12 Complete Score of Early Juju Music by I.K. Dairo 2 (Instrumental part removed after 11 bars)

APPENDIX II

Inter Reformers

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Ebenezer Obey

The musical score is presented in a multi-staff format. The top two staves are for the vocal parts: 'Lead Voice' and 'Chorus', both in treble clef with a common time signature. Below these are the percussion instruments: 'Iya Ilu' (treble clef), 'Omele & Double Toy' (treble clef), 'Maracas & Sekere' (treble clef), 'Agogo & Claves' (treble clef), and 'Akuba & Ogido' (treble clef). The bottom three staves are for the guitar parts: 'Solo Guitar & Rhythm Guitar' (treble clef), 'Hawaiian Guitar' (treble clef), and 'Bass Guitar' (bass clef). The score shows the first 12 bars of the music, with the instrumental parts being removed after this point.

Fig. 13 Complete Score of Intermediate Juju Music by Ebenezer Obey (Instrumental part removed after 12 bars)

Inter Reformers

2nd time skip 12 and go to 18

Lead: Inter Reformers, in ter reformers, in ter reformers a tunde. 1). O

Chr.: Inter Reformers, in-ter-reformers, in-ter reformers tunde.

Iya.

Oml. & D.I.

Mag. & Sek.

Ago. & Clv.

Akb. & Ogd.

S.Gtr. R.Gtr.

H.Gtr.

Bass

13

Lead: su puopaneji, atun gb'ewade 2) Awa Fonu,awa'anao, o-re-a-tun, in - ter-reformers, tunde.

Go To Measure 9

19

Lead: Multiple measures of Instrumental solos

Chr.: Omo o-n'i-le fe lo 'le, o-kunkump'a-ra

26

Lead: da, ogbe Obey'ons'e - re, om'on'i-le fe lo 'le, om'on'i-le fe lo 'le, o-kunkump'a-ra

Chr.: om'on'i-le fe lo 'le, om'on'i-le fe lo 'le, o-kunkump'a-ra

32

Lead: Multiple measures of Instrumental solos

Chr.: da, o-gbe Obey'ons'e - re.

da, o-gbe Obey'ons'e - re.

Fig. 14 Complete Score of Intermediate Juhu Music by Ebenezer Obey 2 (Instrumental part removed after 12 bars)

Inter Reformers

86

Lead: 

Chr.: 

92

Lead: 

Chr.: 

99

Lead: 

Chr.: 

104

Lead: 

Chr.: 

Fig. 16 Complete Score of Intermediate Juju Music by Ebenezer Obey 4 (Instrumental part removed after 12 bars)

APPENDIX III

Praising Mood

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Yinka James

The musical score is presented in a standard notation format. The top two staves are for the vocal parts: 'Lead voice' and 'Chorus'. Below these are the traditional Juju instruments: 'Iya Hu' (a type of bell), 'Omele Sakofa' (a type of drum), and 'Baga Sekere' (a type of drum). The modern instruments include 'Agogo Claves', 'Conga Drums', 'Drum Set', 'Tenor Sax.', 'Electric Guitar', 'Bass Guitar', and 'Piano'. The score is in 4/4 time and features a mix of traditional and modern instruments. The instrumental part is removed after 10 bars.

Fig. 17 Complete Score of Contemporary Juju Music by Yinka James (Instrumental part removed after 10 bars)

Lead: 6 2
Chr.: 6 2
Iya: 6 2
Omb. Sak.: 6 2
Dab. Sek.: 6 2
Agg. Cfr.: 6 2
C. Dr.: 6 2
D. S.: 6 2
T. SX.: 6 2
E. Gtr.: 6 2
Bass: 6 2
Pno.: 6 2

Lead: 11 2
Chr.: 11 2
Lead: 15 3
Chr.: 15 3
Lead: 22 3
Chr.: 22 3
Lead: 29 2
Chr.: 29 2

Lyrics: O-lu-wa l'o s'e - yi fun mi, e - ni-yan ko. O-lu-wa l'o
s'e - yi fun mi ki i s'e - ni-yan. O-lu-wa l'o l'o ba j'e-ni-yan, a ti s'i-re-gun o - re.
f'o ba j'e-ni-yan, a ti wo'le o-la ba le. B'o - se wu'E-le - du - ma -
re, ba ba, l'on so la, b'o se wa l'a wu sa ti, E du ma re, l'on so go.
l'on so la, ba ba mi, l'on so go.
B'o - se wu'E-le - du - ma l'o ba wu'E-le - du - ma - re. a se kan a mu bi o - tu - lu, l'o ba wu'E-le - du - ma -

Fig. 18 Complete Score of Contemporary Juju Music by Yinka James 2 (Instrumental part removed after 10 bars)

Fig. 19 Complete Score of Contemporary Juju Music by Yinka James 3 (Instrumental part removed after 10 bars)

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